3: Simutis S-4 (no date) 1942 RB5 Lithuanians RB5

raised as far back as 1905 by the Lithuanian deputies at the Vilnius diet. That there was a need for reform can be seen from the fact that before the World War, about 450 families possessed 3.5 million acres or 22 percent of all the land. Each of these possessed at least 2,000 acres.[7]

To analyze the political, economic, and social conditions which caused the great part of the land to fall into the hands of a few landlords would require extensive and long study. It may be pointed out, however, that land conveyance was not always effected in an honest way; too often, transfer was forced on peasants by depriving them of owners' rights and making them merely tenants. After the unsuccessful uprisings against the Russian government in 1831 and again in 1863, many participants were sent to Siberia and their lands were confiscated. Some of these lands were later divided into small parcels and distributed among the Russian colonists, while other lands were consolidated into estates (*latifundia*) and, by special decrees of October 4–16, 1835, and December 6, 1842, turned over to families of Russian nobility as *entailed estates*. An estate in this category could not be sold, but, upon the death of the owner, passed on to his eldest son. It was these frozen estates that were the first to be affected by the land reform begun by the Provisional Government of Lithuania in 1918.[8]

It was ordered that all land converted by the Russian decrees of 1835 and 1842 into entailed estates should temporarily be made the state property of Lithuania, to be dis-

[7] Stasys Elsbergas, *Lietuvos Zemes Reforma* (Land Reform of Lithuania), Kaunas, 1935, p. 7.

[8] Salkauskas, K. *Lietuvos Novelos. Veikiančiuju 1935. III. 16 d. Lietuvos istatymu ir isakymu, paskelbtu Vyriausybes Ziniose 1–476 rinkinys* (The Novels of Lithuania. The Laws and Orders of Lithuania, Published in the Government Gazette No. 1–476, Which Are in Force on March 16, 1935), Spaudos Fondas, Kaunas, 1935, p. 324.

11: League of Nations G-4 (no date) 1939 RB5 Lithuanians RB5

VIII. THE ROLE OF LITHUANIAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Women play an important part in Lithuanian agriculture both economically and intellectually. A farm without a woman is considered as extraordinary; the first thing a young peasant does when he comes into property is to marry, and a widower soon marries again. 462

From time immemorial, the peasant woman has taken her full share of responsibility in rural work. Though not on such a big scale as at present, she always made butter and cheese, collected eggs and occasionally fattened a pig for the market and sold a few geese. The more skilled even contrived to sell a little honey, dried fruits, poppy-heads and onions, and used to take to the fair in the neighbouring town their homespun linen or cloth. The woman's modest earnings were independent of the revenue from the farm; they covered the housekeeping expenditure and enabled her to put a little aside and even to help her husband on occasion.

In a number of districts, the ancient custom still prevails whereby a girl could reject a suitor who did not promise to confer on her, as mistress of his house, the right to manage the whole financial side of the farm.

Legally, women are treated in Lithuania to-day on a footing of equality with men. They have the right to own and administer land or other immovable property whether married or not. After the parents' death, brothers and sisters inherit the land in equal shares; the widow or widower inherits 25% of the estate. No statistics are available of the number of women landowners, but they are known to be less numerous than the men. The principal reason for this is the desire to avoid breaking up estates. One very widespread custom in many districts is for the peasant to leave his land to his eldest son, requiring him at the same time to pay over to his sisters and younger brothers in cash or in stock the shares devolving on them. When a girl marries, the share accruing to her is often registered in her husband's name. Before the war, under the law of the Russian Empire, girls in the Province of Kaunas inherited only one-fourteenth of the immovable property. These various factors have all tended to reduce the area owned by women. It is among the owners of large estates that women constitute the highest percentage, but these estates are few in number. 562 428

When an agricultural census was taken in 1930, women were found to constitute 50.69% and men 49.31% of the total adult 162